

News release

Met Office tracks smoke plume

12 December 2005

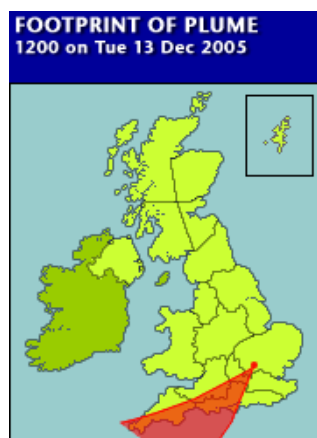
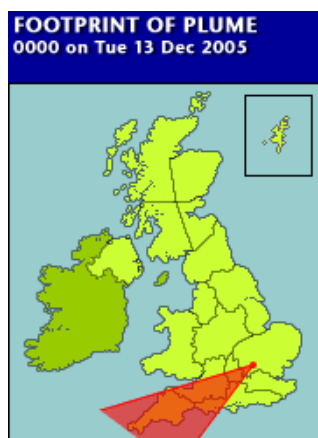
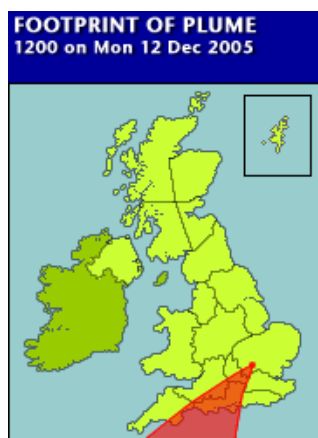
Experts at the Met Office are keeping a close eye on the track of the smoke cloud from the fire at the Hemel Hempstead oil depot.

The Met Office has expertise in modelling releases into the atmosphere and is working with other agencies and groups to assess the changing situation. In order to get a better idea of the situation a special aircraft is being flown into the smoke.

The Met Office/NERC aircraft is fitted with hi-tech equipment which the scientists on board are able to use to record and assess factors including height and components of the smoke cloud.



The dispersion of the smoke is complex because winds at different levels in the atmosphere are moving the smoke in several directions. However, throughout today, the smoke is expected to move in a general south-west direction. The majority of the smoke is still above ground level.



Anyone concerned about the smoke is advised to contact [NHS Direct](#) or the [Health Protection Agency](#) for advice on health implications. For environmental enquiries please contact [defra](#).

The weather forecast for tonight and tomorrow is for dry conditions over southern UK. Reports in the media that polluted or acid rain will fall over London tonight are incorrect.

Earlier today a Met Office spokesman was quoted in the media as commenting about the potential effects on milk production. The Met Office has made no assertions. Dairy UK have made clear that no effects are anticipated.

For further information:

Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655
E-mail: pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680

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